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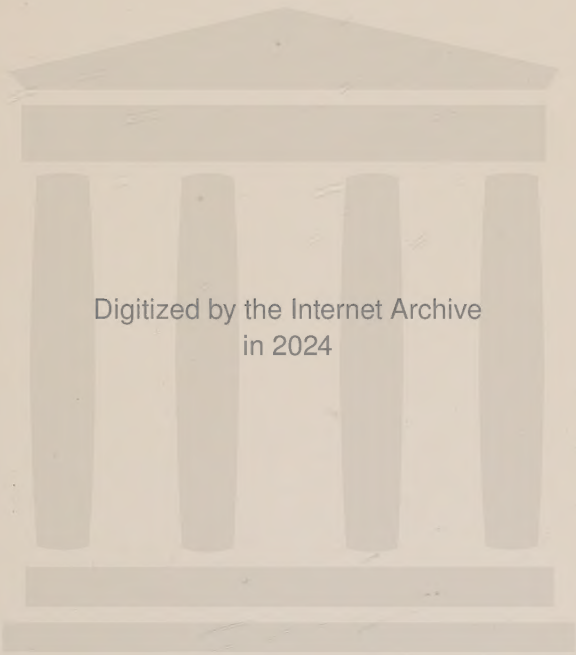
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SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

VEDÂNTA PHILOSOPHY

THREE LECTURES

BY

SWÂMI ABHEDÂNANDA

ON

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

FOURTH EDITION.

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"Self is the lord of Self, who else could be the lord?"

"One's own Self conquered is better than all other people; not even a god could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself and always lives under restraint."—*Dhammapada.*

SELF-CONTROL.

EVERY religion can be divided into two parts, one of which may be called the non-essential and the other the essential. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, ceremonies, and mythology of all the organized religious creeds come under the head of the non-essential. It is not meant by this that they are useless; on the contrary, the very fact of their existence proves that they are helpful and necessary at certain stages of progress. What I mean is, that it cannot be said that they are absolutely necessary for making one live a purely spiritual life. A man or a woman may be highly spiritual without performing any of the rituals and ceremonies ordained, either by the scriptures

of the world, or by any religious hierarchy. A man or a woman may be truly religious without believing in any creed, doctrine, dogma, or mythology. Those who think that these non-essentials are indispensable for attaining to the ultimate goal of religion, have not yet grasped the fundamental principles that underlie all religions; they mistake the non-essential for the essential; they cannot discriminate the one from the other; they lack the insight of spiritual illumination. Those who understand the essentials of religion and strictly follow them in their every-day life do not disturb themselves about the non-essentials; these simple and sincere souls alone reach the goal of religion by the shortest way possible.

The essentials of religion are principally two: Self-knowledge and Self-control. Self-knowledge means knowledge of the higher Self, the divine nature of man; and self-control is the restraint of the lower self or selfish nature. True knowledge of the divine Self comes when the lower self is subdued. In ancient times,

Greek philosophers understood these two as the essentials of religion, therefore over the temple entrance at Delphi the phrase "Know Thyself" was so conspicuously engraven. Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher, interpreted this motto by saying: "It behooves all men to know themselves and to exercise self-control."

In India, the ancient Seers of Truth understood the essential part of religion so well that they tried their best to keep it separate from the non-essential part of the popular religion of the masses. The result of such attempts was the discovery of the system of Yoga. The system of Yoga deals entirely with the essentials of religion; it does not teach any dogma, creed, ritual, ceremony, or mythology. Its main object is to teach mankind the different methods of attaining the knowledge of the true Self, and the practice of self-control. A true Yogi is one who has perfect control over himself, and who has acquired self-knowledge. The science of Yoga explains what self-con-

trol is, how it can be acquired, and what is the nature of self-knowledge. A Yogi therefore reaches the ultimate goal of religion and spiritual perfection without wasting his energy in the practice of non-essentials.

The non-essentials of religion are like a huge heap of husks, under which lies hidden the kernel of the essential truth; wherever there is too much of non-essentials, there prevail religious corruption, superstition, and false theology, the main object of which is to convince the ignorant masses that the heap of non-essential dogmas, doctrines, ceremonies, and rituals must be observed by all who wish to be religious. But the science of Yoga, being free from dogmas, ceremonies, and rituals, suffers neither from corruption nor from superstition, nor does it need any theology. It is pure and simple. It welcomes to its fold all sincere and earnest souls who are searching for higher truth and spiritual life, and seeks to make them spiritual by giving the essentials of religion as their highest ideal. It teaches

them the method by which self-control and knowledge of the Supreme Self can be acquired.

Self-control means the control of the lower self, or the animal nature of man, by developing the higher powers that are latent in the individual soul. Having ascended the grades of evolution from the lower animals, man lives at first on the animal plane; then as he rises higher and higher, the latent powers of the soul gradually begin to manifest and overcome his animal tendencies.

Self-control is not manifested in the character of any man who ignorantly obeys the dictates of the senses, and blindly serves the internal masters of passion, anger, greed, self-delusion, pride, and egotism. Those who can control themselves, or check the mad rush of the mind toward sense objects, and who cease to obey those animal impulses which are standing like fierce enemies in the path of spiritual progress, enjoy undisturbed peace as long as they live, thus reaching the highest goal of freedom; but those who are constantly guided

by sudden waves of passion, anger, pride, jealousy, and hatred, are always disturbed in their minds; they are restless and unhappy. How can persons who are slaves of their senses expect happiness? Happiness comes in the state of perfect freedom, and not in slavery; that freedom again can be acquired only through the practice of self-control; therefore those who desire to enjoy unbounded happiness and peace of mind on this earth should struggle for freedom by learning to practice self-control.

The attainment of self-control is easy for those who have learned to study their own minds, and who, after discovering their weaknesses, try to reform their own characters. Like the lower animals, the natural tendency of human beings is to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. As long as man lives in the darkness of ignorance, and cannot trace the causes which make him happy or unhappy; as long as he does not understand whether happiness and pleasure come from external objects or

from within, so long he fails to be master of himself. Right discrimination of the conditions which make one happy or unhappy is the surest guide in the path which leads to the attainment of self-control.

Now let us examine the present conditions of our minds. They are naturally attracted by the objects which are pleasing to the senses, or which help in fulfilling the purposes and desires that are extremely strong in us. The majority of mankind are attached to those objects which give pleasure, both sensuous and mental. They are never attached to anything or anybody where they do not find pleasure. In the same manner it can be shown that the natural tendency of the mind is also to get away from pain. The eyes are pleased to look at the beautiful color which attracts them, the ears are pleased to hear sweet words, melodious notes, and good music. We like to smell sweet fragrance, and to taste the things pleasing to the palate. Yet that which is pleasing to the senses of one man may give pain to another.

A Chinaman enjoys Chinese music, but it is painful to our ears. Similarly, the music which is delightful to our ears gives no pleasure to a Chinaman. Western music seems like howling and screaming to many Oriental ears which are not trained to it. Many people enjoy curious flavors and high seasoning, and others are disgusted by them. Some people enjoy the burning sensation in the tongue and throat produced by red pepper, while others feel pain from it and shun it. The same color, same sound or taste which is pleasing to one, may be a source of intense discomfort to another. This shows that pleasure and pain are not the inherent properties of the objects of senses, but that they depend upon the conditions of the mind and body which come in direct contact with those objects.

Mind has tremendous power over the body; if a certain idea gets possession of the mind it affects the body and produces corresponding changes in the whole system. The same mind which found pleasure in a certain thing at one

time, dislikes the very sight of that thing if new ideas happen to get a hold upon it. For example, animal flesh gives pleasure to a meat eater as long as he thinks it is the right kind of food, but when the nobler principles of vegetarian diet dawn upon his mind and convert him into a vegetarian, the very odor of meat will be offensive, and may make him feel ill; his stomach will refuse to digest animal flesh, and it may even become a cause of pain and suffering to him. Therefore, it can be said that there is nothing in the universe from which all individuals can derive absolute pleasure or absolute pain, or that can even please the same individual at all times. Those who seek pleasure from the objects of senses cannot stick to one particular enjoyment all the time. If they try to enjoy the same thing day after day, they will soon tire of it; satiety is the inevitable result, and with that comes loss of interest.

Suppose a lady who is passionately fond of the opera should constantly hear the same opera day and night, without hearing or doing

anything else, she would surely tire of it in a few days. Constant change of the objects of pleasure is absolutely necessary for those people who seek pleasure from the external world. It is for this reason that many people who are too poor to afford much variety in their pleasures delude themselves by thinking that wealth would give them all they desire, and envy those who possess large fortunes, foolishly believing that the rich must be always happy. In this way they often fail to enjoy the pleasures within their reach, thus making their life a burden. They fail to understand that wealth has its own trials, that are often only little more bearable than the ills of poverty. The truth is that true happiness can only belong to him who can control his mind. The practice of self-control would be a great blessing to all these unhappy people; it would make their lives happier and better worth living.

Before we can control the natural tendency of the mind to seek pleasure in external ob-

jects, we must know that the feeling of pleasure depends upon the feeling of pain. If we do not have any feeling of pain whatever, we cannot enjoy a pleasant feeling. Pleasure is pleasure only when it stands in relation to the feeling of pain. Whenever we compare one sensation or feeling with another, we find one more pleasing than the other; the less pleasing one is ordinarily called painful. The tendency of our mind is to seek objects that are more pleasing than those which we already possess, or happen to enjoy, and the moment we find a thing which we think would produce a more agreeable sensation than the things we now have, we crave to possess it. Having satisfied the craving, if after comparison we discover that the latter is not better than the former, we remain as unsatisfied as before, and may even wish to go back to the former condition. Thus we can understand that although pleasure and pain may arise in different individuals from their contact with the same objects of senses, the natural tendency of mind is to

seek pleasure and avoid pain. We are attached to those objects from relation with which we derive pleasure, but the moment these cease to yield us gratification, we become indifferent to the very things we so eagerly desired; sometimes we grow to hate them and wish to get away from them.

Our minds are constantly seeking new objects of pleasure through the gates of the senses, and attach themselves to every fresh object that promises to give us a pleasant feeling or sensation. While this attachment lasts, the mind becomes a slave to it. If anything happens to come in the way and prevent the mind from enjoying a particular pleasure, the mind tries to overcome the obstacle. The stronger the opposing power, the greater is the mental struggle to subdue it. If the desire be very strong and we cannot succeed in gratifying it by ordinary means, we often get enraged and adopt more violent measures, thus losing all possibility of a peaceful state of mind.

That simple desire for enjoyment takes the form of a ruling passion, agitates the whole mind, and manifests in the form of anger and unrest. In that agitated state of the mind we lose the sense of right and wrong, memory grows dull, understanding gets confused, we lose foresight and act like brutes. Passion is the stronger form of desire; the same strong desire, when acting under opposition, takes the form of anger. Desire is the first stage, passion is the second stage, and the third stage is anger.

Passion and anger, again, lead to hatred, jealousy, and many other wicked feelings which are expressed outwardly in the form of vicious acts. He who can control his mind from being disturbed by passion and anger has obtained self-control. The control of passions and anger comes when the mind does not seek pleasure from external objects, but learns by experience that pleasure which can be derived through the senses is very transient; it lasts for a few seconds only, and its

true source is not in the object itself, but depends mostly upon the mental and physical conditions of the enjoyer.

We have seen that passion and anger are the second and third stages of desire; these desires, according to the Yogis, remain in the subconscious plane of our minds. Here a question arises: What is the cause of these desires? A Yogi, trying to trace the cause of desires, says that they are the outcome of the dormant impressions in our minds, or the awakened state of these impressions. He further says that when we enjoy any external object through our senses, our minds are impressed with certain changes which are produced while we are in direct contact with the thing. When we eat an apple, the impression of its taste is left in the mind. When we hear a musical note, an impression of the note, pleasant or unpleasant, remains in the mind. Similarly all the impressions which the external objects leave in the mind will remain there in a seed form, or dormant state, by the law of

persistence of force. None of them will be lost; whatever things we have enjoyed or suffered in our lives are stored up in that seed form, or in the form of dormant impressions. These dormant impressions are the causes of our desires.

Some of the Western psychologists have supported this theory of the Yogis. Professor Beneke says in his "Elementary Psychology": "What has once been produced in the soul continues still to exist, even when it has ceased to be excited. That which was conscious merely becomes unconscious, or lives in the internal substance of the soul." Sir William Hamilton admits the existence of the latent impressions when he says: "The whole we are conscious of, is constructed out of what we are not conscious of." He explains the psychic activity of the subconscious plane by comparing the chain of impressions or thoughts with a row of billiard balls, of which, if struck at one end, only the last one moves, the vibration being merely transmitted through

the rest. But a Yogi says that these dormant impressions are the seeds or real cause of desires.

Let us suppose that the mind substance is like a sea, that the surface is the conscious plane, and that the dormant impressions lie deep below the surface. Here we should remember that anything that remains in a dormant state is bound to manifest when the conditions become favorable. Forced by their inward nature, when the dormant impressions begin to manifest, they may be said to slowly rise up from the bottom of the sea of mind in the form of minute bubbles. We may call this bubble the subtle state of desire, or the awakened impression. Then it gradually rises to the surface and appears larger and larger in size. Let us call this bubble state of the awakened impression, desire; then the bubble of desire, after playing on the surface of the mental sea for some time, bursts there and takes the form of a wave, and agitates the whole sea of mind, transforming it into one

mass of impulse. The mind becomes restless, peace is disturbed, power of discrimination becomes dull, we do not know whether good or bad results will follow should we yield to the impelling impulse; we are forcibly driven headlong toward the object of desire, whatever it be, mental (like ambition, pride, etc.), or merely sensuous. In fact, our controlling power having been overcome by that wave of desire, we can no longer call it desire. It temporarily takes the form of a ruling passion, or strong impulse. That tremendous impulse controls our nerves, muscles, and the whole body; we struggle to gratify this longing, only to find, when we have attained the thing and gratified the longing, that the satisfaction is but brief. The tempest that wrecked our self-control gradually subsides, and the particular desire that provoked it returns again to its dormant state; then a temporary peace of mind is regained and we remain happy for a time.

In the meanwhile another dormant impres-

sion gets ready to appear in the form of a bubble. Slowly it rises up from the subconscious to the conscious plane, and the same process is repeated. This ever-recurring series of desires and their temporary gratification forms the daily life of all such persons as have not learned to control their minds. When this fleeting peace of mind, or so-called happiness, has been secured, the desire subsides into a dormant state for a longer or shorter period. This process is continuously going on in each mind at every moment. Suppose a person is invited to a dinner party, where he partakes of something very delicious which he never tasted before and which he likes immensely. Do you think that the impression of that taste will be lost as soon as the dinner is over? Certainly not; it will remain in the mind and engender a desire for the same thing again; the memory will recall that impression and it will become the cause of a fresh desire. In this manner it can be shown that every new impression is the cause or seed of a new desire.

When a man begins to drink intoxicating liquors he feels a peculiar sensation; it drives away his dullness, exhilarates him, excites his nervous system, and makes him happy for the time being. After the effect of the stimulant is over, the impression of the agreeable feeling it produced is left in his mind; for some time it remains latent, then it rises up in the form of a desire, or bubble, to the surface of his mental sea. Rising to the surface it bursts and produces a wave, or impulse, which intensifies the desire and leads him to drink again. The fresh exhilaration creates another impression, which stamps itself upon the former, and the process goes on with increasing frequency. With every fresh yielding to desire, the old impression is deepened, until the series of stored-up impressions becomes so strong that it forms a part of his nature and becomes what we call habit. Similar processes have produced all varieties of habits, good and bad, which we find in different people in different countries. A kindred process

produces what we call instinct in the lower animals.

The stored-up impressions of one life are not lost by the death of the body, but will remain latent for some time and will become the causes of future desires in another life. Each one of us is born with the stored-up impressions of his past birth, which will reappear in the form of various tendencies, desires, and habits. This is the explanation of the wide variations we see in members of the same family, for which heredity alone, or even heredity plus environment, fails to account. As the number of impressions increases, desires also increase, as has been said; if we allow the desires to rise up and play in our minds, they will take the forms of passion and anger, disturb mental peace, create new impressions, and be in turn the causes of fresh desires. Thus, there is no hope of controlling the mind by mere gratification of desires. There is no hope of satiating the craving for enjoyment by getting

the objects of pleasures; this is simply putting fuel on fire, or oil on flames. The more we enjoy, the more will desires increase. Foolish people, who have never analyzed their minds, indulge their desires and seek pleasure from outside objects. No one has succeeded in attaining self-control by being a slave to desires, nor has any one become free from desires by gratifying them. Therefore, a Yogi says: "As fire is not quenched by butter, so the fire of desire will never be put out by the objects of pleasure. The more butter is poured on a fire, the more it will flare up; similarly, the more the objects of desire are indulged, the more the desires will increase. If a person were to possess all the objects upon this earth, still his greed would not stop, he would seek something more." Do you suppose that a man who works hard to become a millionaire will ever be satisfied with his possessions and cease to acquire more? He will go on seeking to add to them as long as he will live. A poor man desires to be rich, a rich

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man desires to be a millionaire, and a millionaire wants to be a multi-millionaire, and so on; where is there any rest? Where is there happiness? When will his thirst for possessions or enjoyment cease? Will he ever acquire control over his mind? Perhaps not in this life.

Thirst for enjoyment is the real disease in us; its various symptoms are passions, ambition, pride, hatred, jealousy, anger, etc. Tremendous mental strength and will-power are required to control the restless mind from taking the forms of waves of passion and anger. The perfect *restlessness* of the mind of an ordinary person who is the slave to his desires and passions has been vividly described by a Yogi; the poet could not find a better illustration than to compare it with a monkey, who is restless by nature; then thinking this was not quite enough, he added drunken monkey, stung by a scorpion. When any one is stung by a scorpion, he jumps about from place to place for nearly two days, so

you can imagine the restlessness of that poor monkey; still the poet found something lacking in the simile, so he completed it by saying: "At last the monkey was possessed by a demon." Is there any expression by which we can describe the wretched state of that poor monkey? Such is the ordinary state of our mind. Naturally it is restless, but it becomes more so when it drinks the wine of ambition, still more when it is stung by the scorpion of jealousy; but the climax is reached when the demon of pride enters the mind and takes possession of it. In such a case, how difficult it is to bring the mind under control! To conquer mind is more difficult than to conquer the whole world. He is the greatest hero and the real conqueror of the world who has conquered his own mind. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he who taketh a city." A Yogi says: "If one man conquers in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors." Therefore we should pay

special attention to the study of the mind; we should learn to analyze its nature and constantly watch over its various modifications, trying to develop and strengthen the will-power.

A Yogi develops his will-power by daily practice; he rouses up the higher powers and continues to fight against his greatest enemies with firmness and determination until he accomplishes his end. Perfect self-control of a Yogi is that state of mind where no desires or passions of any kind disturb the peace and tranquillity of his soul. Such a state can be acquired more easily by removing the bubbles of desires before they take the wave form of passions, that is, by attacking them while they are in their weak state. This can be done either by right discrimination of the nature of desire or by comparing the transitory pleasure which results from our contact with the objects of senses, with the serene, peaceful mind which is undisturbed by desires or passions. We should also remember

that the highest ideal of our life is not pleasure of the senses, nor slavery to desires and passions, but the attainment of mastery over the lower self, and the manifestation of the Supreme Self.

There is another way of obtaining self-control, through concentration and meditation. Concentrate your mind upon the Supreme Self and do not let it be disturbed by any other thought or desire at that time. Those who have read the "Light of Asia" will remember that when Buddha sat in meditation under the *Bo* tree all the dormant impressions began to rise in his mind. They are described as the attendants of Mâra, the personified evil thought. But Buddha said: "It is better to die on the battlefield while fighting with the enemy than to be defeated and forced to live like a slave, seeking little bits of sense pleasures and enjoyments." With such a strong determination Buddha became master of himself; whosoever will display similar determination of purpose and strength of

character, will surely attain perfect self-control. They alone who have acquired self-control enjoy eternal peace and happiness in this life, and attain the goal of all religions, the knowledge of the Divine Self.

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION.

THE spiritual life of a man or a woman depends upon the subjugation of the senses, upon control of the passions, and upon the manifestation of the divine powers that are latent in every individual soul. Such a spiritual life can be attained by different methods. Each of these methods is called in Sanskrit "Yoga." The method or path of concentration and meditation is known as the "royal method," or *Râja-Yoga* in Sanskrit. It is the royal road which leads to the realization of Truth. The word Râja-Yoga is a compound word; Râja means king, and Yoga method of concentration. The method of concentration is described as the king of all other methods, because nothing can be achieved without concentration. There is no power in the universe higher than the power which

comes through concentration. The power acquired by its practice can control all the physical forces of nature. A Râja-Yogi says that wherever he concentrates his thoughts, there, for himself and to his own consciousness, he will control phenomena. Râja-Yoga teaches that mind is the sovereign power in the universe. Faith-healers, mental-healers, Christian Scientists of to-day have appreciated only one hundredth part of the mental powers which a Yogi in India claims to possess.

When the mental powers are properly guided and directed toward any external object the true nature of that object is revealed, and the result is the discovery of the physical laws which govern the phenomenal world. The powers of the mind are scattered like the rays of an electric light that illumines the surrounding objects. An electric light which enlightens the objects within a very limited circle can be made to illumine distant objects, if we know the art of gathering its rays into one beam and can throw that one flood of con-

verged rays on anything at a considerable distance, as is done by a search-light lantern. We may compare the concentrated mind of a Yogi to a mental search-light. There is as much difference between the scattered mind of an ordinary individual and the concentrated mind of a Yogi as there is between the light of an ordinary lamp and that of an extremely powerful search-light. A Yogi can throw the search-light of his mind upon the minutest objects at any distance in the realm of the invisible and unknown, and can learn most easily every particular connected with those objects. When the same concentrated mind of a Yogi is directed towards the internal world, it enlightens the most subtle things connected with his inner nature and unveils those higher laws which govern his spiritual nature.

Each individual possesses the power of concentration in a greater or less degree, and uses it in his or her every-day life, either consciously or unconsciously. Concentration in its simplest form is known to us by the name of at-

tention. If we do not pay attention to the object which we see, hear, or perceive we cannot understand the nature of that thing. When we read a book if our attention be diverted to some other thing, then our eyes may read the letters automatically without grasping the meaning or sense of the subject. When any one speaks to you, if you are inattentive, the words uttered will enter your ears; the vibrations of air carried by auditory nerves to the brain-centres will produce molecular changes in the cells of those centres; all the physiological conditions necessary for the perception of a sound will be fulfilled, but still for want of attention you will not hear it. When you are attending a lecture, if your attention be fixed on something which is more interesting, you will not be able to understand what is being talked about—in fact, you will not even hear a single word that is said. Similarly, in every instance of perception of sense objects you will notice that if there be no attention behind it, you do not really perceive at all.

The power of attention is not altogether an acquired faculty but is largely a gift of nature. Many are born with this power largely developed, but wherever there is the manifestation of mind, we find more or less of the expression of this power of attention. It is a spontaneous outgrowth of the nature of our mind.

The power of concentrated attention manifests itself in the lower animals as well as in man. It varies only in the degree of intensity but not in kind. All animals first direct their attention to the search for food. A vulture fixes his attention on the object of his prey, looks at it from a great distance, then falls upon it and catches it. When a cat catches a mouse or a tiger falls upon his prey, he fixes his attention first, controls his senses from distraction, collects the scattered forces of his mind and body, and ultimately succeeds in fulfilling his desires. His attention is so concentrated at that time that he hardly takes any notice of anything other than the object in

view. Hunters know this fact so well that they take advantage of it when they go out hunting wild animals. A great Yogi in India once noticed a crane standing motionless on the side of a brook with his attention so deeply concentrated upon a fish as not to notice the hunter who was going to shoot him. The Yogi was so astonished that he exclaimed: "O crane! Thou art my teacher in concentration. I shall follow thy example when I practice concentration." In all beasts of prey the necessity for this concentrated attention is well illustrated by the way in which they get their food. If their attention be distracted by a sudden noise or other interruption their quarry is likely to escape them. There are many instances of the power of spontaneous attention possessed by lower animals. In such cases mental powers are centred into a focus and directed towards one object. Every sense is alert and under complete control, the whole physical activity is converged towards one point, and for the time being motion of the

body is arrested. Experience has taught the animal the necessity of this course of action.

When the diverging rays of the mental energy which moves the whole system in different directions are centred into a focus and when the concentrated energy is forced through one channel, it strengthens the mind. That mental strength sometimes expresses itself as physical or muscular strength. In our every-day life we find the expression of the same power of spontaneous attention. Only the workman who is able to fix his mind upon his work can give it intelligent attention, can rise above being a mere automaton. A motorman cannot drive an electric car if his whole attention be not fixed upon his work. That this is a well-understood fact is evidenced by the rule that to prevent distraction motormen in street-cars are not allowed to talk with passengers. The rider of either horse or wheel who allows his surroundings to absorb too much of his attention is liable to get a sudden tumble. The successful chess-player, playing perhaps

half a dozen games at once, has to exercise a marvellous force of concentrated attention. In dancing, singing, painting, writing, or in any other avocation no man can do his best unless his mental powers are properly concentrated upon the object of his particular line of work.

Without using the power of attention there could not be any great artist, sculptor, or philosopher; no mathematician, scientist, or chemist; no astronomer, musician, or composer. The more this power is developed the more marvellous are its results. All the discoveries in the realms of nature, inventions of machines and of other things which we see to-day, all the amazing achievements of modern science, are nothing but the results of that wonderful power of concentrated attention displayed by the inventor and the scientist. If a born genius should suddenly be deprived of this power, he would act like ordinary men, for what we call genius is in reality immense power of concentration, so that all the faculties

devote themselves to one object, which produces work so remarkable that we at once regard the man who manifests this wonderful ability as above the dead level of ordinary humanity; while on the other hand if an idiot could develop and manifest this one power of concentrated attention, then he would be reckoned as one of the geniuses of the world. Such is the power of concentration. It is the source of all our knowledge. In short, it is the condition of our life. Without exercising a certain amount of this power we could only live while watched over by others, we could not avoid the constant difficulties and dangers with which our life is beset on all sides. Ninety-nine per cent. of the diseases and accidents in our lives are the results of inattention to the laws which govern life and health.

A child in the earliest period of its life expresses this innate power of attention by fixing its gaze upon shining objects or upon the face or eyes of its mother or nurse. That simple undeveloped and spontaneous power of atten-

tion in a child gradually develops as the little one grows older and comes in contact with the world.

The spontaneous attention which expresses itself in lower animals, in children and uncultured persons, is directed at first towards the objects that are most necessary for the sustenance of life, such as food, clothes, etc. As we rise above the animal plane through culture and education the power of attention manifests in a different way. Then we gradually learn to direct our attention towards objects which are not merely attractive to the senses or necessary for bodily sustenance, and can fix our minds on such things as are attractive to our intellect and higher nature. Here begins voluntary attention, or attention well controlled and properly directed by intellect and will. This leads to the intellectual culture of an individual and to the attainment of mental strength and to the creation of new thought-currents.

The same attention, when directed towards

the observance of moral laws and right actions which bring good results not only to ourselves but also to our fellow members in the social order, leads to the moral culture of our minds. Again, when our voluntary attention is directed towards our spiritual nature, it makes us virtuous and religious and develops our spiritual character. Ultimately, when it is directed in the form of concentrated meditation towards the Universal Spirit, or God, it brings the highest wisdom. It leads to the freedom of the soul from the bondages of ignorance, delusion, and selfishness, and results in the attainment of Bliss absolute, which knows no limit. This highest state is called the state of God-consciousness. Therefore, everything that has brought human beings to the present stage of civilization, culture, and advancement; every act that produces physical good, and moral, intellectual, and spiritual concepts is but the expression of that well-directed power of concentrated attention. Emerson says: "The one prudence in life is concentration; the one

evil is dissipation. Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade—in short, in all management of human affairs."

The spontaneous attention, which is a gift of nature, can be transformed, by voluntary effort, into the power of higher concentration upon the most abstract truths, and lastly upon the Absolute Reality of the universe. That simple power can become enormously strong if we know the secret of controlling it. As a gardener, by severe pruning, forces the sap of the tree into one or two vigorous buds instead of suffering it to spindle into a sheaf of twigs, so a Yogi, by controlling the dissipated mental powers and concentrating the whole energy on one point, stopping for the time being the miscellaneous activity of the mind, develops a power which brings wonderful results in every line of his work. The control of attention by will-power is called concentration, in Sanskrit Dhâranâ. Perfect concentration brings supreme control over external and internal phenomena. This kind of higher concen-

tration is described by Patanjali in the third chapter of his "Aphorisms on Râja-Yoga"; Dhâranâ, or concentration, is when the mind, being restrained from taking various forms, holds on to some object, either in the body or outside the body, and keeps itself in that state. If, by gradual practice, we can control the modifications of the mind-stuff, such as sensations, passions, desires, etc., and converge the whole mental energy towards one point, then that process is called Dhâranâ, or concentration. The result of such concentration will vary according to the nature of the object towards which the concentrated mental energy is directed. The principal aids to concentration in the way of obtaining the best results from it are, first, right discrimination of the object of concentration; secondly, a clear and definite understanding of what one wishes to acquire; thirdly, self-confidence; and lastly, firm determination, settled purpose, and perseverance. Disraeli said: "I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction

that a human being with a settled purpose must accomplish it, and that nothing can resist a will which will stake even existence upon its fulfilment." According to a Yogi, a firm, resolute, and determined mind with a settled purpose will accomplish the best results of concentration in the shortest time possible.

Man's greatest achievement is to understand the mysteries of his own being—to know himself. A true Yogi, therefore, does not care to concentrate his mind upon a search for pleasure as worldly persons do. He does not even spend his mental energy in trying to avoid things which may appear unpleasant for a short time. He does not divert his mental powers by fixing his attention upon the diseases of other persons, nor does he concentrate them to gain selfish ends by injuring others, as trusts and monopolies of the civilized world do; nor does he practice black magic. A true Yogi never concentrates his mind upon the phantoms of wealth and vain

earthly ambitions. According to a Yogi, this kind of misdirected concentration brings waste of that energy which must be stored up to a considerable extent before the highest result of concentration in spiritual life can be obtained. All these worldly objects are but obstacles in the path of spiritual progress. Few people in this world can understand why these things obstruct the path of spiritual development. But a true Yogi is one who can discriminate truth from untruth, real from unreal, spirit from matter. A true Yogi does not wish to waste his energy in gaining mere transitory things. He wants to attain the highest ideal of life; so he centres his thoughts upon the Supreme Truth or the absolute reality of the universe, and the result of this concentration is the Samâdhi, or the highest superconscious, tranquil state of mind where alone is possible divine communion, or realization of unity with God on the spiritual plane.

The Hindu psychologists have classified mental activity into five different states: (1)

Kshipta; (2) *Mudha;* (3) *Vikshipta;* (4) *Ekâgra;* (5) *Niruddha.* The first means "scattered," that is, always active, the kind of mind which is constantly at work and never restful. In this state the whole mind rushes like a mad elephant in whatever direction it chooses. It wanders here and there without any aim or purpose, and cannot be brought under control. Those who are in such a state of mind do not even try to stop this purposeless activity, because they believe it to be their normal state and that all other states are abnormal, morbid, or diseased. They are afraid of sinking into indifference or losing their individuality if any one tells them to reduce the tremendous speed with which the machine of their mind is running and advises them to take a little rest. They think rest means either sleep or death.

The second class is *Mudha,* meaning "stupid and confused." Those people who are dull, lazy, inactive, and idiotic belong to this class. In this state intellect, understanding, and rea-

son are enveloped, as it were, with the darkness of ignorance. These two are the two extreme states of activity and inactivity of mind. The third state is called *Vikshipta*, that is, sometimes active and sometimes dull. The fourth state, *Ekâgra*, means "one-pointed," or, in other words, concentrated. The fifth mental condition, known as *Niruddha*, is that state of well-controlled concentration in which all involuntary activity is subdued and the mind, transcending its ordinary limitations, reaches the superconscious state of *Samâdhi*, the state of God-consciousness. The first three states are to be found in ordinary persons, and none of them is of any help in spiritual life. The last two alone are conducive to spiritual growth.

In the fourth state, that is, when the whole mind is concentrated or "one-pointed," we can realize the true nature of things; all painful modifications of the mind become less and less; all knots of desires for worldly things and sense-pleasures are slackened, and they

cease to disturb the peace of mind. This state of mind leads gradually to the attainment of the fifth state, when comes perfect control over the mind. Those, therefore, who aspire to spiritual perfection, should make every effort to reach these last two states.

When the fifth, or superconscious, state of concentration is attained the true nature of the knower or Spirit (*Atman* in Sanskrit) is manifested. But at other times the knower appears as identified with the modifications of the mind substance. Sometimes the knower is identified with impulses, good or bad, sometimes with emotions, painful or pleasurable sensations, or with the changes of gross body and its diseases. This identification of the spirit (or Atman) with the changes of mind and body is the cause of our bondage, misery, and suffering. When the knower of misery and sorrow becomes identified with them, he appears as miserable and sorrowful; but in reality the knower is always distinct and separate from the object known.

For instance, when an iron ball is heated in a furnace, it appears red and hot. An ignorant person looking at it will easily mistake it for fire. The intellect, mind, and body may be compared to the iron ball and intelligence to fire. Intellect, mind, and body being heated or illumined by the fire of intelligence, which is the true nature of Spirit or Atman, appear to the ignorant as intelligent. By mistake the changes of mind and body are identified with the pure and changeless source of intelligence. As we can know the true nature of the iron ball by separating it from the fire, so we can learn the true nature of the "iron ball" of mind-stuff, when in the state of *Samâdhi* we separate it from the fire of intelligence. We then realize that it, like the iron ball, is but dark and dead in itself, and that only when illumined by the pure intelligence, or Atman, does it glow into apparent life.

We can illustrate this in another way. When any bright-colored object is placed near a piece of pure, transparent crystal, the whole

crystal is so suffused with the color thrown upon it that only a close observer can detect that in itself the pure crystal has no color. Similarly, the true nature of the Atman, or Spirit, is covered over by the reflected light of the constantly changing modifications of the mind-stuff—such as thoughts, feelings, passions, desires, etc.—until the pure "crystal" of Atman appears to have these modifications in itself. Only the ability to rightly discriminate the real from the apparent can enable us to discover the truth in either case.

If for a moment any one can make his true Self free from the changeful reflections of the mental activities, that instant he will realize the Atman or Spirit, and he will cease to commit further mistakes. No longer he will identify himself with the various changes in his mind and body. Concentration and meditation are the only processes by which this realization can be accomplished.

There are various methods for developing the power of concentration. Those methods

should be learned from skilful spiritual teachers who have practised them for a long time and whose lives are pure, chaste, and free from blemishes. One can easily learn some of the methods from Râja-Yoga or any other book on the practice of Yoga, but without the help of a competent teacher no one should begin to practise them. The power of concentration can be acquired by mental processes alone, or by physico-mental processes. The mental process begins with holding the mind to certain points, sensations, or feelings. Suppose you try to concentrate your attention on your little finger. At that time you will have to feel your little finger only, you will have to gather up, as it were, all the mental powers that are scattered all over the body and converge them towards your little finger. If any other thought or idea arises in mind, you must not let your attention be distracted by it, nor let it wander in any other direction. After practising for a few days you will notice that you have acquired some power of controlling your

attention and of directing it towards one object. When you have fully attained this control over your power of voluntary attention, you will be able to concentrate your whole mind on any object, whether external or internal, concrete or abstract, material or spiritual.

At the time of perfect concentration you will notice that the rhythm of respiration will change, and that it will gradually become slower and slower, perhaps it will almost cease for the time being. A clever and experienced French thinker, Dr. Lewes, said: "To acquire the power of attention is to learn to make our mental adjustments alternate with the rhythmic movements of respiration."

The motion of the lungs has a very intimate relation to the activity of the mind. If we control the activity of mind we can also control the motion of the lungs; and conversely, if the motion of the lungs is controlled the mind also comes more easily under control. Again, when the motion of the lungs is under

perfect control, every organ, nay, every particle in the body, is brought under the control of the Spirit, or Atman.

Thus, when the supreme control over attention is acquired by voluntary effort, one can fix his attention on any part of the body and experience strange sensations and wonderful phenomena. It is a well-known fact that one can easily feel pain in any part of the body by strongly fixing his attention there. By an analogous process one can get rid of pain in the body. Mental healers of the present day are familiar with such phenomena, although many of them fail to understand the rationale of their cures. One can cure diseases by fixing attention on the diseased part and sending an opposite current of thought. This method has nowadays become a very common practice with the Christian Scientists and mental healers under a variety of names. But one thing should be remembered, and that is that each individual is born with this kind of healing power. No one can give you that power.

It is one of the natural powers of the human mind. It is better to heal one's self than to be healed by some other mind. Do not let your mind be controlled by any other mind. People who go to mental healers or Christian Scientists for help and who allow themselves to be influenced by the minds of others, do not realize that by allowing themselves to fall under the hypnotic power of a stronger mind they are walking in a path which leads to mental degeneration. Many cases have been known where minds have been degenerated into slaves of other minds, losing all power of self-control. How pitiable is the mental condition of those self-deluded ones who go about seeking help from other minds! Because a Yogi thoroughly comprehends this danger, he never allows himself to be influenced by another mind. By constant practice he unfolds those higher powers which are latent in his own soul. A true Yogi is master of himself. He knows no other master. His mind, senses, and body obey his commands.

A true Yogi understands all the finer forces and the laws which govern them. This right understanding and right knowledge of the true nature of soul, Atman or Spirit, are the results of the power acquired by perfect concentration.

Concentration leads to meditation. Meditation means the continuous or unbroken flow of one current of thought towards a fixed ideal. After gaining control over the mind through the practice of concentration, if we can compel the thought-current to flow in one direction for a certain length of time we have attained to the power of meditation. In this state the mind is not distracted by external noise or by any disagreeable modification of the Chitta. The objects of meditation will vary with the individual ideals of the persons who practise it. For spiritual unfoldment the ideal of the unity of the Atman, or individual spirit, with the Brahman, or universal Spirit, will be one of the best subjects upon which to meditate. Such ideas as "I am Spirit beyond

body and senses and above mind;" or "I am one with the universal Spirit;" or "I and my Father are one," will be of great help to those who wish to quickly reach the highest goal of all religions. First repeat it orally, then mentally. Concentrate your mind on the true meaning and meditate upon it. Let the same current of thought flow without any break or distraction, then only will it be real meditation. If your mind be distracted by any other thought or idea or by external disturbance, firmly bring your attention back again to the chosen ideal. If any evil thought arise in the mind, overcome it by arousing a good thought. If envy or jealousy arise, the feeling of friendliness should be used to counteract it. The feeling of love should be cultivated to conquer hatred; and forgiveness should be practised to overcome the feeling of revenge. In this way you will conquer all evil and injurious thoughts by their opposites. After regularly practising meditation for half an hour each day, you will notice, after a month, that your

whole nature has been changed, and that your mind has become peaceful. Those who have never tried meditation will find it very difficult at first, because the long-standing habit of permitting irregular activity in the mind will baffle all the attempts of the beginner. Various thoughts and ideas which you have never cherished consciously will spontaneously arise from the subconscious plane and will show what tremendous strength they have. The beginner has to slowly and cautiously subdue these obstructive thoughts. He must not pay any attention to them. He must labor hard to prevent his mind from being distracted from the train of thought he has decided to follow. Various disturbing elements will arise, will play for a short while on the conscious plane, and if not noticed will then disappear. But if, on the contrary, he should pay a little attention to them, they will become stronger, take the form of impulse, and force his whole mind in some other direction. Therefore, instead of following those unbidden

thoughts and ideas, he should hold to the ideal.

No sage, whether a Buddha or a Christ, no saint, whether of the past or of the present, has ever found peace without practising meditation. It is the road which leads to the attainment of perfect tranquillity of mind. We are spending the whole of our valuable lives in making money, in eating, drinking, and doing such things as bring a little comfort to the body or a little pleasure to the mind. But we do not think for a moment what a valuable opportunity we are losing. We seek food for the body, but we never seek the food for the soul. Feed your souls with the eternal Truth that manifests itself to the purified soul, with that nectar and bliss which can be obtained only through the practice of meditation. Make meditation a part of the daily routine of your life. Seek the company of some disinterested lover of mankind, follow his instructions as closely as possible. Keeping this ideal before your mind, march onward through

the path of meditation fighting the enemies of wavering attention and unruly mind like a brave soldier, like a true hero, and stop not until the goal is reached; ultimately you will be the conqueror of the universe, and the kingdom of God will be yours. By gaining the power of meditation you will enjoy supreme happiness by entering into the state of *Samâdhi*, the state of God-consciousness.

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS.

WELL has it been said by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the greatest poet-philosopher America has produced, that "A man is the façade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his actions, would make our knees bend." The eating, drinking, planting, counting man is limited and imperfect, and is what we call the "apparent" man, but the real man is free and all-wise, divine, and always happy. The soul in each individual is a centre of that circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose centre is everywhere. That circle is called universal Spirit. It is

the source of infinite wisdom, of all knowledge, all truth, all science, all philosophy, art, beauty, and love. This unlimited circle of infinite wisdom is the real background of each apparent individual. Not knowing that the eternal river of wisdom is constantly flowing within him, the apparent man seeks here and there, and struggles for a drop of knowledge to satisfy his intellectual thirst, like the fool, who, standing on the banks of a mighty river, digs a well for water to quench his thirst. We do not know how wise and good we are in reality. It takes a long time to discover that all wisdom and all goodness dwell in each individual soul. We are now seeking wisdom from outside, because we are thinking by mistake that it will come from outside. The great sages, prophets, and wise men of the past were those who knew the secret of unlocking that door which prevents the outrush of that inexhaustible river of wisdom which is constantly flowing behind each individual ego. When the all-wise Self begins to manifest its higher powers,

the apparent man is called an inspired seer of Truth. Then he realizes his divine nature, ceases to live like an animal, and attains to the state of God-consciousness, which is the highest goal of spiritual unfoldment. Then he is truly religious, and reaches the goal of all religions. All religions are like so many attempts of the human mind to rise above the animal plane, to go beyond the senses and to know the reality—in short, to reach the state of God-consciousness.

In India, from the Vedic period down to the present time, this attainment of spiritual perfection or God-consciousness has been regarded as the highest aspiration, and the loftiest aim of humanity. True religion begins when the soul of man realizes this God-consciousness, and not until then. The man who reaches this state does not seek anything from outside of himself. He finds all wisdom within his own soul. Amongst the Hindus, from the most ancient times, the attainment of God-consciousness has been the theme of

rich and poor, of kings and beggars, of saints and sinners. It was for this attainment that many kings and princes renounced their thrones and sacrificed their wealth, name, fame, comforts, luxuries—in short, everything that was dearest to them. All the noble qualities which adorn the character of sages and make a man godly in this life are but the outcome of the attempts for the attainment of God-consciousness. Is there anything more ennobling, more sublime, more divine, than the matchless purity of heart, serene child-like simplicity, lofty self-abnegation, and disinterested love for all which are displayed in the character of one who is conscious of his divine nature? No. Such characters are the beacon lights that are ever shedding their guiding rays on our toilsome path and beckoning us onward to the haven of realization. They are the great leaders of humanity, they rule over millions. They are manifestations of God on earth. They are worshipped by the vast majority of mankind as the incarnations of

God. They expressed in their lives the ultimate goal of all religions. The ordinary or apparent man is self-deluded and blind to Truth, is imperfect and limited in every way, and has no spiritual character, being ruled only by self-interest. All of us know that we are now living more or less selfish lives and acting under limitations, that we are not exactly what we wish to be. During the calm moments of our lives, we sometimes look at ourselves and feel that our souls, like eagles, are free by nature and able to soar into infinite space, but are now enchained by selfishness and confined in the cages of gross human bodies. At such times we realize our bondage and seek freedom. Longing to fly into the infinite space of eternal bliss, we struggle hard to break our chains, to throw down the barriers which confine us, and to conquer all environments which keep us in bondage.

Each individual soul is born to combat nature and her laws. Our lives consist in

the constant effort of the soul to overcome the limitations imposed by them. The forces of nature are trying to drag the soul in one direction, while the inner forces impel the soul to resist and rise superior to them. The soul does not want to follow, like a slave. It is struggling to subdue nature and to dominate over her laws. This struggle is the cause of the social as well as of the spiritual progress of humanity. A man who does not know how to fight against nature and how to gain victory over her laws, but who on the other hand follows her blindly, is an uncivilized man, is a savage, and on a level with the lower animals. True civilization means the conquest of nature by the human soul. The whole history of humanity teaches this fact. If we study external nature we find that nature tells us: "Obey my laws and commands;" but we say: "No, why should we? We are thy masters, thou must obey." Physical nature tells us to go naked and live in caves or forests, like the animals, without any cover over-

head, but we say: "No, we will have clothes and proper shelter," and we obtain them. Nature would destroy them, but we protect them by our strength and preserve ourselves from heat and cold and changes of weather by which nature would make existence impossible for us, and in the end we succeed. How do we succeed? By studying nature and her laws, and by utilizing her forces in such a way as to make her obey our commands. We know how tremendously powerful are the forces of nature—electricity, steam, etc.—but we handle all these gigantic forces of nature and make them serve us. This victory of man over physical nature is due to those higher powers which are latent in the soul. The powers which overcome nature are nothing but the intelligence and will possessed by man. That which conquers is higher than that which is conquered. Therefore physical nature is weaker than the powers of intelligence and will. Similarly, if we study internal nature, we find there also a

constant struggle between the higher and the lower mind, between the higher and the lower intelligence, between the higher and the lower will-power, between the spiritual, real, or divine man and the apparent or animal man. The lower mind, lower intelligence, lower will, the apparent or animal man is that which obeys the physical and sensuous needs of the body, as a slave obeys a master. The higher mind, higher intelligence, higher will, the spiritual, the real, or the divine in man is that which tries to conquer and subdue the lower nature and dominate over it. Of course we do not find this fight in the lower animals, nor in those who live like them. When this struggle begins we are no longer purely animal, but we are human or moral. To be human or moral, however, is not to be perfectly spiritual. We make a distinction between the moral and spiritual planes. The moral plane is the intermediate stage. The moral man is partly animal and partly spiritual. In a moral man there is a constant

struggle between the animal and the spiritual nature. The moral man strives to overcome the animal in him by fighting against it and by constantly watching his mind to prevent the lower or animal nature from spreading its influence over him. A moral man must, as far as possible, strive to avoid temptation, because he is not yet strong enough to overcome its influence. His effort must be to rise to the higher plane, which is beyond temptation. This struggle will only cease when the animal nature is completely conquered, and the moral man has become truly spiritual, or divine. When that stage shall have been reached there will be no room for temptations. As long as a man is struggling with the animal nature, he is ethical; but when he has conquered it completely, he is spiritual. The moral man can be tempted by animal attractions, but the truly spiritual man is far above all temptations, he is beyond the reach of the lower tendencies and animal propensities that trouble the moral man.

In a truly spiritual man all struggle of this sort has ceased forever. Then the true spirit, or the divine nature in man, reigns in its own glory and appears like the self-effulgent sun above the clouds of selfishness and imperfections. The angels, or the personified higher powers of the true Spirit,—nay, the whole world bows down before the victorious conqueror and sovereign of nature. That is the state which was attained by Buddha and by Christ. The Prince Gautama, or Sâkya Muni, became the Buddha, and Jesus of Nazareth became the Christ when each attained this state of God-consciousness. Whosoever reaches that realization becomes perfect and free from selfishness and all other imperfections. Man alone can reach such a state of God-consciousness. The lower animals and those who live like them must evolve to the human or moral plane first, before they can even attempt to attain the state of God-consciousness. As the animal nature evolves into the moral or human plane,

the power of reaching this state is gradually developed, and the individual ego enters upon the different stages of spiritual unfoldment. When it reaches the ultimate point, it is conscious of its divine nature. That point is the climax of the spiritual development of the apparent ego. It is the state of eternal bliss and perfection.

We cannot think of another state higher than that of God-consciousness, because in this state, the soul communes with Divinity and is united with the Infinite Source of love, wisdom, and intelligence. The individual soul, or the "I," becomes one with the Father in Heaven, or the Infinite Spirit. Can you imagine any state higher than the state of the union of the individual soul and the universal Spirit? Thus we see that there are three principal stages through which the apparent ego passes before God-consciousness is attained. First the animal nature, which must be overcome by human or moral nature; secondly the moral nature, which in its turn

must develop into spiritual nature. When a man is on the animal plane, he is extremely selfish, bound by desires, a slave of the passions and sense-pleasures which have no restriction of any kind; he has no purity, no moral standard of life or of truthfulness. His highest ideal is the comfort of his body, and he abhors things spiritual, thinking it a loss of time and energy to even hear about his spiritual nature, or to speak of it at all. But when such a man wakes up from this deep sleep of ignorance and self-delusion, either naturally or through the help of a holy Guru or spiritual teacher, he begins to seek the moral life. This is the state of awakening of the soul. It is the stage of a beginner in the path of God-consciousness. Then he tries to live a moral and virtuous life, and begins to examine his own nature, tries to learn his own faults and weaknesses, and having discovered them strives to correct them. This is the state of purification of the soul, and is the second stage of spiritual unfoldment. It is called in Sans-

krit *Sâdhaka*, or the neophyte state. A neophyte should struggle hard to conquer his nature, to subdue his passions, and to overcome, by controlling all his habits, the tremendous force which the animal nature exerts. If he does not know how to do this, he should follow the instructions of one who knows, or of one who has realized the state of God-consciousness. He must not forget his ideal in his every-day life, and he must try to be always on his guard against temptation. Especially must he remember that one cannot know the highest truth unless he is truthful himself. Truth cannot be obtained by falsehood. Truth must be gained by truth. If we are not truthful we are not ready to reach that state. So a neophyte should try to be truthful in every word and action, because just so far as he fails in this will he fail to reach eternal Truth.

Four things are absolutely necessary for the purification of the heart and for conquering the animal nature. First, self-control,

which includes the control of senses and the control of mind by the practice of concentration; secondly, truthfulness; thirdly, disinterested love for all; fourthly, unselfish works. In one of the Upanishads we read: "He shall not attain to spiritual perfection who has not ceased to follow wicked ways, who has not subdued his senses, who has not controlled his mind by concentration, and who is not truthful and kind to all." These lines contain the whole of ethics and the essence of all the scriptures of the world. The secret of spiritual progress lies in the practice of these four.

Whether we believe in God or not, whether we have faith in any prophet or not, if we have self-control, concentration, truthfulness and disinterested love for all, then we are on the way to spiritual perfection. On the contrary, if one believes in God or in a creed and does not possess these four, he is no more spiritual than an ordinary man of the world. In fact, his belief is only a verbal one. Wher-

ever these qualities are manifested we should remember that there the spiritual unfoldment of the soul-powers has commenced. During the process of spiritual evolution the powers of self-control, concentration, etc., which are latent in each soul, begin to unfold from within and manifest themselves in the works of every-day life.

This world is a great school, as it were, in which the individual egos are students, and the various stages of spiritual evolution in the soul-life are the different grades. When one course is finished, the ego, or apparent man, begins upon another. If he wants to study one course or lesson over and over again, there is nothing to prevent him from doing so. He may continue in this one grade for years,—nay, for many incarnations, if his desire does not change. But the moment he feels tired of repeatedly studying the same course, no longer finding pleasure in it, he naturally seeks a higher class and takes up new lessons. As long as one course continues to be attrac-

tive and absorbing, it satisfies us and we do not feel the necessity of another; but the time is sure to come when the lessons of to-day will lose their charm and will appear dull, insipid, and monotonous. Then we shall seek something higher, something better and more attractive. This search of the ego for something higher and better than it has yet possessed is the cause of its spiritual evolution.

The majority of mankind are so much captivated by sense-objects that they cannot think of any higher ideal; they have weakened themselves so much that they do not realize the slave-like condition of their minds. Therefore the Gitâ says: "Few among thousands of such slaves of passions and desires seek freedom, while others take delight in slavery; and few among thousands of such seekers after freedom persevere until the emancipation of the soul and spiritual perfection are attained." No one can force another to become spiritual by making him swallow, as it were, the pill of spirituality.

Spiritual unfoldment is brought about by the evolution of the inner nature of the apparent man. The desire to know the spirit must arise spontaneously in the human mind, and when that desire shall have grown sufficiently strong, it will force man to discriminate spirit from matter, the eternal from the non-eternal, truth from untruth. This discrimination is the third stage of spiritual unfoldment. True discrimination leads to the fourth stage in the path. It is dispassion, or non-attachment to material and non-eternal things. In this stage, wealth, property, and sense-enjoyments will have no charm, no attraction for the discriminating soul. In this state the whole aim of life will be changed. If the entire world be shaken to its very foundations, it will not affect the soul which has reached this stage.

When this state has been acquired, the neophyte reaches the fifth stage, which is that of enlightenment. In the course of his onward progress he passes through many inter-

mediate stages, where he experiences many wonderful powers and encounters many strange and sometimes alluring things. If he allow his mind to be attracted by any of those powers, then his spiritual progress will be stopped there. Psychic powers, such as the power of reading the thoughts of others, of knowing what is going on at a distance, of foretelling the future, of curing diseases, etc.—all the powers which are latent in every human being come to tempt the student and drag him downward. If ordinary sense-pleasures are so powerfully attractive, how much more so will be the new and strange temptations to which the attainment of higher mental powers exposes him! A seeker for spiritual perfection, however, must carefully conquer those temptations, or his quest will be in vain. He should remember the parable of the woodcutter and the Sage and march onward, without paying attention to anything outside of the ideal he has set before himself, which is the realization of God-consciousness.

A poor woodcutter lived in a village in India near the outskirts of a dense forest. He earned his living and supported his family by selling fire-wood which he collected in the forest. He spent his days in cutting up branches of trees, which, after drying, he made into a bundle. At the close of the day he carried the bundle to the market-place and sold it for a few cents. His whole family depended upon those few cents for their daily living. In this manner the poor man struggled for several years. One day, as he was coming out of the forest bending under the heavy weight of the big bundle of fire-wood on his back, he met a kind-hearted Sage. The Sage, seeing his miserable condition, spoke to him, saying: "Good man, why do you not go onward into the deep recesses of the forest?" The poor woodcutter replied: "Why, Sir, I get enough wood here; what would be the use of my going farther into the deep forest?" Again the Sage urged him to go farther into the woods, and thus

advising him went away. After his departure, however, the words of the Sage returned to the mind of the woodcutter and began to produce a deep impression. The next day, when he came to the spot where he had seen the Sage, he remembered the words of the holy man and decided to make an experiment, so he went into the denser part of the forest. As he pushed through the tangled undergrowth, wondering what the Sage had meant by his advice, he suddenly smelled the sweet odor of sandalwood, and looking about found himself close to a sandal-tree. He was extremely delighted. He mentally thanked the Sage, and, collecting as much sandalwood as he could carry, brought it to the market-place and sold the bundle for a very high price. That evening he had more money than he could have earned in five years if he had followed his regular work. Next day he went again to the forest, but he remembered the Sage's advice and said to himself: "The Sage did not tell me anything about sandal-

wood; he only told me to move onward." Thus thinking, the woodcutter left the place where he had found the sandal-tree and went deeper into the forest. At last he came upon a copper mine. He collected as much copper as he could carry, and selling it in the market-place he got plenty of money. Next day, still following the Sage's advice, he did not stop at the copper mine but moved onward. He came upon a silver mine, and carried away with him quantities of silver, which made him quite rich. But he did not forget the Sage's advice to move onward. He pushed on and on into the forest, not allowing himself to be diverted by the many remarkable discoveries he made on his way. At last, after passing a gold mine, he came to a mine of diamonds and other precious stones. Feeling sure that this must be what the Sage intended him to reach, he did not seek farther, but took the jewels and ultimately became the wealthiest man in that part of the country. Similar is the case of the man who aspires to spiritual

perfection. The advice of all the great Sages to seekers after spiritual wealth is to "move onward," and not to stop after making a little progress, or after possessing some of the psychic powers. Being deluded by desire for name and fame and by ambition of various kinds, many people mistake psychic powers for spiritual gifts and think that if they can cure diseases by mental means, they have attained to spiritual perfection. The number of these self-deluded supernatural power-mongers is daily increasing in America under various names. If you seek spiritual perfection and God-consciousness, beware of the temptations that these psychic powers offer to the unwary. None of these powers is the sign of true spirituality. Therefore the seeker after spiritual perfection should carefully overcome these obstacles in the path of his spiritual advancement.

Those who are attached to these powers will not attain to God-consciousness while that attachment lasts. They keep man on

the psychic plane and delude him in such a way that he often ceases his effort to rise higher. These powers are described by Hindu sages (Yogis) as far greater and more subtle temptations than the grosser ones of a lower plane. We ought to avoid carefully the longing for such powers. Let them come if they will; but do not seek them. They are merely the sign-posts that mark our progress; they are not the highest objects to be attained nor are they of any real value in themselves. It is better to consider them simply as obstacles to be surmounted. They cannot produce any injurious effect on one who does not forget his real goal, but steadfastly pushes on, determined to reach the highest ideal of life—God-consciousness, constantly keeping this aim before his mind's eye.

After conquering the temptation of psychic powers, the true seeker after God-consciousness reaches the fifth stage of spiritual unfoldment. His spiritual eye gradually opens, he begins to see glimpses of the higher truth, he

knows that the soul is separate from the body; he understands what the subtle body is; whether the soul reincarnates or not and whether the soul existed before his birth;—all such questions are solved in this state of enlightenment. He finds explanations of everything, both physical and mental, and discovers the true relation of the soul to God.

Having attained this enlightenment, the soul rises to a still higher plane of spiritual unfoldment. It is the sixth stage, that of perfect spiritual illumination. Then the goal has been reached, and even in this life, that soul has found eternal bliss in God-consciousness. This is called by various names by different philosophers and sages of different countries. In Sanskrit it is called Samâdhi. The Buddhists call it Nirvâna, which means the cessation of misery, sorrow, selfishness and all other imperfections, and the attainment of blessedness. It is not a state of nothingness, as some people believe, but the attainment of perfection. The Christian Mystics

of the Middle Ages described it as ecstasy, and modern Christians call it the state of communion with God. The name may vary, but the state itself appears to be the same in every case. This state is the ideal of all religions of the world. Among Christians, Mahomedans, Buddhists, Hindus, and others, the seekers after Truth struggle hard to attain this state of superconscious realization. Jesus became the Christ after attaining it, and Sâkya Muni became the Buddha or the Enlightened. Râmakrishna, the great Sage of the nineteenth century in India, reached that stage and is now worshipped by thousands of people as an Incarnation of God upon earth. All the great sages and prophets described this as the highest attainment. In this stage, the river of the higher Self, the Real man, flows with tremendous force into the ocean of Divinity and nothing can resist the course of that current. The soul in each individual is constantly trying to manifest its Divinity or true nature; and its attempts are

perfectly fulfilled when the sixth stage is reached. In this state of realization all problems of life and death are solved, all the doubts of the mind cease forever, and all questions are answered. In this state one sees the underlying unity of the whole panorama of phenomena, and the individual soul then transcends all phenomena and their laws. When such a man wakes up from the superconscious state and comes down to the plane of ordinary consciousness, his whole nature is transformed, he manifests Divinity in every action of his life and sees the same Divinity in sun, moon, stars, in his own Self and everywhere in the universe. He puts on his eyes new glasses, colored, as it were, with the tinge of the divine Spirit, and wherever he looks, he sees through them manifestation of divinity, and that everything exists in God. Many philosophers have attained to this state. Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist who lived two centuries after Christ, reached it four times in his life. Some people are afraid of losing their individuality.

But we can never lose our individuality. Plotinus, after reaching this state, said to his friend Flaccus that in it we realize the Infinite—"You ask how you can know the Infinite? I answer not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The Infinite cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer, in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite anxieties. Like only apprehends the like. When you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its divine essence, you realize this union, nay this identity." Porphyrius attained to this superconscious state when he was sixty-six years old. Dionysius, who lived in the fifth century, called it the state of the mystic union, or when the soul is united with God. The great Christian mystic, Meister

Eckhart, who lived in the fourteenth century, described the nature of this state of God-consciousness thus: "There must be perfect stillness in the soul before God can whisper His word into it, before the light of God can shine in the Soul and transform the Soul into God. When passions are stilled and all worldly desires silenced, then the word of God can be heard in the Soul." The idea is that calmness of mind and concentrated attention are needed if we wish to hear the divine word. How can we expect to hear that divine voice within us if our minds are disturbed with sorrows, desires, and anxieties? We will have to make our minds free from these for the time being. In that peaceful state comes revelation, and revelation or inspiration means the disclosure of the higher Spirit within us. When that revelation comes, then we understand the nature of that "Unknown and Unknowable," as it is called by modern science. Then it becomes known and knowable, not by the finite mind, but by the all-knowing Spirit.

He who has not reached this state of God-consciousness will stumble hundreds of times before he can grasp its meaning. He will perhaps say: "How is it possible for the created to be one with the Creator?" Or, perhaps he will say: "Can a man who is a sinner by birth ever reach such a state?" Some will say this is the state of nothingness. Horatio Dresser, Mr. Savage, and some others regard it as a state of unconsciousness. A learned professor once told me that there is no such thing as the superconscious state. These people cannot be convinced by arguments or words, they need to experience this in their own souls. All great Seers of Truth have said that there is such a state. It is not trance, nor catalepsy, nor is it a state of hypnotic sleep. In that superconscious state the whole nature is transformed. The man who has reached it no longer lives as he did before; he is illuminated, and his face is radiant with divine glory. His sight changes into spiritual sight. He may have been a dualist before and may

have believed that God was outside of the universe, but now he sees God everywhere. Becoming dead to selfishness, he sees the all-pervading divine will as working in the universe, and he thinks no more of his will as separate from the universal will. He has reached spiritual perfection who, having surrendered his own will to the universal divine will, keeps quiet like a leaf that has fallen from a tree. When the wind blows, the dead leaf is moved and carried from place to place; in like manner, when the truly spiritual man has become dead to selfishness and remains tranquil, the wind of the eternal will of God moves his mind and body. The mind and body of such a man become the instrument and playground of the Almighty will. This is the seventh and final stage of spiritual unfoldment. It is called in Sanskrit Jivan Mukti, salvation in this life. The soul has now become a Christ, or a Buddha. Both these words signify the highest spiritual state of God-consciousness and not any particular person.

If it be claimed that such a state is impossible to attain, how then can the claim be made that Jesus the Christ was conscious of his divine nature? He is the foundation upon which the fabric of Christianity has been built, and he showed evidences of superconsciousness or God-consciousness. Some people may despise this state and call such teaching mysticism. If this be a mystical state, then Jesus was a great mystic, because he was conscious of his divine nature, and his religion is founded upon mysticism. If Jesus attained to that God-consciousness, then every individual may do so; he was not an exception, as some people may think. In fact, each one of us is bound to attain to that state. No one will be lost. There are various paths through which that God-consciousness can be gained. If we make God-consciousness the highest ideal of life, keep our minds open to truth, and do not blindly follow any teachings but use our common sense and reason, then sincerity and earnestness guided by proper exer-

cise of reason and earnest search after truth under the directions of a truly spiritual teacher, will assuredly lead us through all these stages to the state of God-consciousness and spiritual perfection. If you wish to attain to that state in this life and to live like a master on the spiritual plane, and not as a slave of sense-pleasures, you will have first to control the animal nature by the higher nature. The higher nature is already within you. Realize it. Control your lower mind and passions for the time being, then you will be able to live on the spiritual plane as the master over sense-pleasures. If you cannot live such a life, seek the company of those who are their own masters. Through association their life will reflect upon yours. You may say: "Where shall we find such characters?" If it be difficult for you to find such a character, then take an ideal life and follow that ideal and try to become like it. If you have faith in Jesus the Christ, keep that ideal before your mind. Take his life as a model and try to

live up to it. Do not listen to anybody's explanation of your ideal. Throw aside all theology, dogma, superstition and the scheme of salvation formulated by the priests, and try to live as Jesus lived. All explanations will come to you from within. If you cannot do that and still believe in God and in prayer, then worship God and pray to Him for this God-consciousness. Your prayer will be fulfilled. If you do not believe in God or in prayer, and do not care to follow the life of Jesus, your path will be entirely different from that of the believer. Still, do not despair, there are other ways. You do not have to believe in God, or worship Christ. Seek the Truth and try to realize the unchangeable reality of the universe; to discriminate the changeable from the unchangeable, the spiritual from the material. The power of discrimination exists already in your soul. You need not go begging for right knowledge. Open your mental eye and see what is spirit, what is matter; whether spirit is the result of

matter, and whether this life is the result of chance or of law. If you cannot discriminate in this way, strive to know who and what you are and what is your relation to the universe. If you think that this is not easy, then do unselfish works, work for work's sake without thinking of the results. Whenever you work in your every-day life, think that you are paying off your debts, as it were, and not working to gain anything. Do your duty in the best possible way, and do not worry about the results. If this seems to be difficult, then try to love all living creatures as you love yourself. If you think that you cannot do this easily and successfully, then try to concentrate your mind on your higher nature, or take one sacred word or one holy idea and meditate on that. There are hundreds of ways by which one can attain to God-consciousness and spiritual perfection. There are as many ways to Truth as there are individuals who seek it. This is the peculiarity of the teachings of the Vedânta philosophy—it does not

offer a single method only and then condemn all others. It says that each individual must suit himself or herself according to the powers, tendencies, and capacities of the individual ego. That path which is good for one individual may not be so for another. We have to start from where we are now standing. Each one of us is at a certain stage or rung of the ladder of evolution. Such being the fact, each must take the path suited to his nature and follow it sincerely, and must not let his mind be muddled by the opinions of other people. We must use our own reasoning powers and common sense, which is the best sense we have. Then the light of spiritual illumination will gradually dawn upon the horizon of our souls and we shall be able to see things as they are. On the contrary, if we are guided by the opinions of others, we shall not gain much. There are thousands of preachers, philosophers, ministers, and priests in the world; each one of them is trying to impress upon the minds of

his hearers that his path is the best and the only right one. Now, who shall decide which is right? We cannot decide upon the highest until we attain to the highest, because our decision always depends upon certain standards, which again are subject to change; that which seems to be the highest to-day may not seem so to-morrow. Only that man who has attained to the highest standard of life can say which is the highest and best in reality. All the greatest sages and wise men of the world, however, although they lived at different times and in different countries, are unanimous in declaring that the state of God-consciousness is the highest. Whenever they describe it they are unanimous in their description. The statements of Christ, Buddha, and Krishna, of Plotinus, Eckhart, Râmakrishna, etc., are without material differences. They all teach that there is one universal goal for all the seekers after truth, and that that goal is the attainment of God-consciousness. It is the highest ideal of all re-

ligions. It makes no difference whether we belong to this sect or that denomination. Spirituality can never be confined within any sect, creed, or denomination, nor can it be limited by any organized religion. It depends entirely upon the evolution of the inner nature of the apparent man. The religion which does not teach it, which does not say that God-consciousness is for every individual, irrespective of caste, creed, or nationality, is not worthy to be called a religion. Such religions are artificial and consequently useless. Vedânta is not a dry system of speculative philosophy, as some think, but its ideal is to make each individual soul reach the state of spiritual perfection; to bring each soul face to face with eternal Truth. According to Vedânta, each soul will attain to the state of God-consciousness, sooner or later, by the process of spiritual evolution. "Even if the greatest sinner, who has sinned for a hundred incarnations, can realize his divine nature for even one half second, he shall be

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